



In Touch South India

Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai



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<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

USS Nimitz Visits Chennai

Further cementing ties between the United States and India, the momentous visit of the USS Nimitz and USS Pinckney July 2-5 was a landmark event. In addition to taking Indo-U.S. military-to-military ties to a new level, the visit of over 6,000 Nimitz and Pinckney sailors to Tamil Nadu strengthened people-to-people relations as well. Chennai's citizens enthusiastically welcomed the sailors, over 650 of whom volunteered to work on community service projects around the Chennai metropolitan area. Chennai's business community also benefited from the large number of visitors who collectively spent approximately \$1.5 million while in port. The first-ever visit by a nuclear-powered warship to India generated intense interest and was without question a huge success.

By all accounts, the 11 community service projects the sailors participated in were the highlight of the visit. A total of 659 crew members of the USS Nimitz and USS Pinckney dedicated nearly 4,000 man hours and over \$7,000 of their own money to benefit hundreds of underprivileged children, women and men across Chennai. After spending months on board without a port call, crew members arrived on shore itching to meet and interact with Chennaittes. Instead of going to the beach or otherwise availing themselves of much needed rest and relaxation, the crew members put in hard work at each project site, all the while displaying good humor and an obvious delight in the chance to engage the local

population. (See photos this page and next.)

Project sites included a home for HIV/AIDS-infected children, an orphanage for poor Muslim boys, a school for the speech-impaired, a school for mentally and physically disabled children, an old-age home, a home for mentally ill destitute women and a fishing village that was hit by the December 2004 tsunami. Crew members painted classrooms, picked up garbage and debris, helped in construction work, leveled ground and planted saplings, among other activities. They also donated items such as sports gear, uniforms, toys and personal care products. U.S. Ambassador to India David C. Mulford, Consul General David T. Hopper, Commodore Adam Levitt and Captain Michael Manazir also visited several of the sites.

The sailors of the USS Nimitz and USS Pinckney were deeply touched by their interactions with Chennaittes, especially with the children, and many described their experience in Chennai as "life altering." Crew member Robert Johnson put it simply, "Being out there with the kids and helping them made it the best Fourth of July (American Independence Day) I've ever had." And as noted in several letters to the editor appearing in local newspapers, the good works of the young American sailors were recognized by the people of Chennai and will be remembered for years to come.



USS Nimitz sailor meets children at tsunami-affected village
Kannathur Reddy Kupam

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Consulate main web link:

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

Other links:

<http://americanlibrary.in.library.net>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

<http://www.usaep.org>

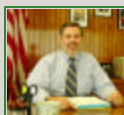
<http://buyusa.gov/india>

Consulate Phone Number:

044-2857-4000

Consulate Fax Number:

044-2811-2020



The visit to Chennai of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and the destroyer USS Pinckney was far and away the biggest official American event in Chennai in recent memory. The Nimitz was accompanied by a good deal of controversy, but it also brought a great opportunity for the U.S. and Indian navies to learn about each other and, equally important, for thousands of American sailors to visit Chennai and to meet its people. Citing the warm welcome the sailors received and their ready engagement in numerous community improvement projects at schools, orphanages and tsunami-affected villages, one national news magazine concluded, "Goodwill clearly seems to be the only fallout of this nuclear warship's visit."

The United States Ambassador to India, David C. Mulford, was in Chennai to help welcome the Nimitz, and he also visited Hyderabad for a milestone event there. In the presence of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S.R. Reddy, Ambassador Mulford and AP Government officials signed a lease for us to use the historic Paigah Palace as the initial home for our new consulate in Hyderabad, scheduled to open in late 2008.

These are only some of the many events and engagements that are indeed keeping America "in touch" with South India.

-David T. Hopper, Consul General

Indian Cinema: Winds of Change

Actors Kamal Haasan, Madhavan and many other luminaries of the South Indian film industry participated in a day-long seminar co-organized by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, the Madras Film Society (MFS) and the Consulate General Chennai's Public Affairs Section. The July 14 seminar focused on current challenges facing Indian cinema, such as overseas marketing, producer and distributor relationships, technological advancements and piracy protection.

In his remarks at the seminar, Mr. Hopper underlined how more liberal economic policies have helped Indian industry, including the film industry, to gain access to the global marketplace. "The Indian entertainment industry," he said, "is poised to take off to take advantage of these improved conditions. Indeed, Indian films are already the top-grossing foreign films in the U.S., selling more tickets and earning more money than films from France, Italy or any other foreign source."

Mr. Kaplan threw a note of caution into the discussion, noting that the same technological advances that have made it easier to make and distribute films have also given rise to new forms of piracy – for example, counterfeit optical discs. The loss in revenues from such piracy is enormous and hurts developing countries as much as it does wealthier economies. Mr. Kaplan said that the U.S. Government, through an initiative called Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy or STOP, is working with other governments, the private sector and international organizations to promote strong laws against piracy and strong enforcement of those laws.

Indo-American Association

Born in 1950 when a group of young women returned to Madras after completing their studies in the United States, the Indo-American Association (IAA) has for more than half a century built bridges of understanding between the two large democracies on opposite sides of the globe. The association is decidedly non-political with an emphasis on promoting friendship through cultural and social activities.

During its formative years, Dr. Thomas W. Simons, U.S. Consul General in Madras (1957-1963), helped nurture the Association, a tradition that has been followed by subsequent Consul Generals, including the current Consul General, David T. Hopper. Some of IAA's landmark achievements are the issuance of a *John F. Kennedy memorial stamp* on June 15, 1964, the institution of the *Elihu Yale Rolling Shield* for outstanding academics in 1973, the *Annual Martin Luther King Memorial* lecture series, and the formalization of *Denver and Madras as Sister Cities* in 1984.

On June 28, 2007, IAA launched its monthly lecture series by eminent personalities. The next lecture will be by writer and cultural historian Mr. S. Muthiah at the Taj Coromandel on Monday, August 20, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.

If you are interested in participating in IAA activities or wish to become a member, you may contact IAA via email: (iaa_chennai2007@yahoo.co.in); telephone (044-2644-1256); or cell (98410-85838 / 98409-75819).

Positive Images



A student of PSBB Senior Secondary School explains her "Save Our Globe" educational project to Public Affairs Officer Fred Kaplan and Dr. Y.G. Parthasarathy, Dean and Director, PSBB Schools — Photo credit The New Indian Express



Consul General David Hopper presents a USS Nimitz commemorative medal to Mr. Rustom Dastur, builder of a model of the USS Nimitz



A USS Nimitz sailor makes friends with local children

U.S. Consulate in Hyderabad by End 2008

The beautiful and historic Paigah Palace, built in the 1880s, will be the temporary home of the new U.S. Consulate in Hyderabad. Fulfilling a promise made by President Bush when he visited Andhra Pradesh in March 2006, Ambassador David C. Mulford on July 3 signed a lease with the intention of starting operations by the end of 2008.



Ambassador and Mrs. Mulford in front of the Paigah Palace

The new Consulate will be our fourth in India after ones in Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai. It will make it far easier for the people of Andhra Pradesh to apply for visas and to obtain other services from the U.S. government, and it will, according to Ambassador Mulford, give the United States a window on “a well-managed city, a city that works and a city that has a broad and diverse economic base.” The Consulate in Hyderabad will be a leap forward in the U.S. presence in South India.

American Library Roundtables



The topics for the June and July American Library roundtable discussions were life-saving vaccines and the international movie industry, respectively. Dr. Nisha Gupta, Behavioral Scientist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, led a lively program on June 5 that dealt with safety issues, cost-effectiveness and the future of vaccines. On July 31,

K. Hariharan, Director of L.V. Prasad Film and Television Academy, moderated a debate that centered on solutions to the high costs of promoting films and the lack of an effective system for distributing smaller, independent productions.

Consular Corner:

Top Five Myths About Getting a U.S. Visa

According to Consular Section Chief Mark Fry, many applicants for U.S. visas believe in certain myths about how the process works. Here are five deeply-held beliefs about visas that are simply untrue:

1. *The right document or documents will get you a visa.*

Wrong. Although on occasion some documentation may help an applicant's case, the consular officer relies most on what an applicant says during the interview. If the officer needs a specific document, he will ask you for it.

2. *You need to rehearse your answers to the questions you expect to hear.*

Wrong. Scripted answers make you sound like you are hiding something. Instead, answer honestly about your intentions for study, tourism, or work in the United States.

3. *Paid visa “coaches” really know visa issuing from the inside, and their help is essential.*

Wrong. Paid visa “experts” are preying on your anxiety, making you think that if you purchase their help, you will be successful. You can get more reliable information at no cost at the U.S. Consulate website in Chennai:

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/visainfo.html>.

The answers to most common questions are available online at http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/frequently_asked_questions.html.

If your question really is different, you can query the consulate at ChennaiNIV@state.gov.

4. *Telling a few lies here and there is fine—everyone does it.*

Wrong. If you are caught defrauding a consular officer, you may be permanently ineligible from obtaining a visa to the United States. We urge you to consider the consequences before you make a major mistake.

5. *Whatever your friends have told you about getting a visa is the way it is.*

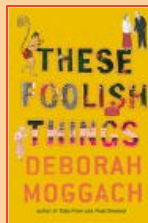
Wrong. Sometimes your friends may not know everything. Rely on the clear information provided by the U.S. government at this website: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

What We Read

Paul Hinshaw
Vice Consul

These Foolish Things
by Deborah Moggach

Lecherous Norman is driving son-in-law Dr. Ravi Kapoor crazy. In desperation, the good doctor decides to open an assisted living center in his native India for aging Brits – with Norman as the first resident. *These Foolish Things* follows the adventures of the home's retirees-in-exile as they move to India and discover a country that defies their expectations. From befriending young call center employees to taking wild rickshaw rides, Norman and his cohorts find that their lives regain long forgotten vitality and meaning as they follow new, unexpected paths in their new home.



Daniel Keen
Vice Consul

Flood Tide
by Clive Cussler

Beautiful women, old airplanes, elegant cars and underwater adventure feature in this swashbuckling thriller. The villain seeks nothing less than to change the flow of the Mississippi River, thus disrupting major shipping lanes and causing unspeakable levels of devastation to surrounding areas. To do this, he conspires with corrupt government officials and trafficks in narcotics, weapons and people. There is never any doubt that the good guys will triumph over evil; however, Cussler takes the reader on such an enjoyable ride that the foregone conclusion is not a disappointment.



Astronaut Sunita Williams Enthralls Chennai Students

Inspired by the Bhagavad Gita, comforted by Lord Ganesha and spurred to achieve by parents who taught the values of persistence and hard work, astronaut Sunita Williams set new records for women in space, spending 195 days at the International Space Station and logging more than 29 hours in spacewalks.

On July 20, less than a month after Commander Williams's return to Earth, one hundred students in Chennai had the opportunity to interact with the Indian-American astronaut who joined them from Johnson Space Center in Houston via a digital video conference facility at the Consulate General. Commander Williams was also connected with the American Embassy and the Consulates in Kolkata and Mumbai.

The students from Chennai asked sophisticated questions about the science of space travel, the mental rigors involved and how space affects one's sense of time. They also asked more personal and philosophical questions about fear and courage, religion and science and about how Commander Williams reconciled different aspects of her identity – as a woman, an engineer, a naval officer and an American of immigrant parents. The video with Williams's answers can be seen at <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov> by clicking on the link under Spotlight.



Sunita Williams from Houston and Sowra Fathima and Punita Verma in Chennai

Commander Williams gave credit to her Indian-born father and Slovenian-born mother for giving her the courage to push forward in life despite occasional dis-

appointments and setbacks. She noted that she grew up in a household that was both Hindu and Catholic and that, as a child growing up, she found no conflict between her mother's and her father's basic religious values. She brought a Ganesha idol and a copy of the Gita with her as companions in space.

At the end of the video conference, the Consulate General turned the tables on the students by organizing a quiz on the astronaut's life and her experience in space. The students were able to answer almost every question put to them, right down to the name of the Williams dog – Gorby. Finally, Pooja Sheth of Sacred Heart School emerged as the winner and received as a prize a biography of Sunita Williams inscribed by co-author Captain S. Seshadri.

Access to English for Non-Elite Teenagers

Since its inception a few years ago, the U.S. State Department's English Access Microscholarship Program has reached some 20,000 teenage students drawn from non-elite sectors in 44 countries. The program provides them with English teaching materials and a classroom experience that emphasizes active learning.

In South India, the Access Program recently celebrated two major milestones – a graduation and an inauguration.

On June 11, Embassy and Consulate officers presented graduation



Consul General Hopper, with Cultural Affairs Officer Ragini Gupta and the Prince of Arcot, meets students of the Madrasa-I-Azam

—Photo credit The New Indian Express

certificates to 100 students in Thiruvananthapuram to acknowledge their successful completion of the program. The students used their newly acquired English skills to perform skits and sing songs for the gathered audience of prominent leaders and educators, parents and other invited guests, including Justice Fathima Beevi, former Governor of Tamil Nadu. The students impressed everyone with their enthusiasm for using their polished English communication skills. Several teachers and parents confirmed the value of the program, noting the remarkable improvement in the students' communication, social and behavioral skills.

On June 22, Consul General David Hopper inaugurated a new Access Program for 53 boys at the Home for Poor Boys, a charitable trust of the Madrasa-I-Azam Mosque in Chennai. Sharing the dais with the Prince of Arcot and the Chief Qazi of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Hopper commented on the importance of English in today's globalized world. Fluency in English, he said, will give the boys a leg up in their studies and expand later employment opportunities. The students exhibited their enthusiasm for the program as they interacted with Mr. Hopper in English using the material from their very first lessons – already setting high expectations for this new batch of Access learners.

Tell us what you think!

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